

## **ATTACHMENT A**

# **VIRGINIA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT MODEL**

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Virginia's model of refugee resettlement originates from the purpose of the refugee resettlement program at the federal level, namely, promoting effective resettlement through attaining self-sufficiency at the earliest time possible. The model is a cohesive and comprehensive plan for resettlement based on the knowledge of what works throughout Virginia. It was developed by the Office of Newcomer Services in consultation with state level staff and representatives from private resettlement agencies and ethnic organizations, and it has its origins in the combined experience and expertise of refugee resettlement agencies across the Commonwealth. The model is based on the following principles:

- Long-term public assistance utilization is not an acceptable way of life in America and is therefore not a resettlement option.
- A refugee's early employment promotes his/her earliest economic self sufficiency.
- Refugee resettlement involves many services which may be provided concurrently, progressively, and/or successively, but always in such a way that they constitute a continuum of services beginning with the voluntary agency (VOLAG) at arrival in the U.S. and continuing through self-sufficiency leading to citizenship.
- Self-reliance and a sense of personal responsibility must be integrated into a Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP) for each refugee which ensures a central point of contact and which is family-based.
- Coalitions and linkages of service providers, *where functionally appropriate and feasible*, ensure strong public/private partnerships.
- Service providers must work in coordination with other agencies to maximize community resources and to create a seamless service delivery system.
- Services must be sensitive to cultural issues and must be implemented by staff that mirror the population served.
- Mutual assistance associations, which are incorporated refugee organizations that address the social service needs of a specific refugee population, and ethnic organizations bring unique strengths and cultural knowledge to the resettlement process.
- There must be barrier-free access to programs, activities, services, and entitlements that include language provision for all refugees.

ONS promotes a model based on the belief that refugees are best served by a community-based system of care that is comprehensive, coordinated, and responsive to the strengths and needs of refugees and their families. Subsequent to the reception and placement interval of the continuum of resettlement, ONS funded refugee service providers assess the needs of newly arrived refugees and refugee families and design refugee specific services that address these needs. **These services must be:**

## 1. Case Managed and Family Based

A resettlement model must have at its core a strong case management approach. Central to Virginia's service delivery system is a comprehensive plan for resettlement for each refugee entering the Commonwealth. **A primary case manager, who acts as a central point of contact and accountability, is assigned to each refugee or refugee family.** Case managers are responsible for guiding the individual or family throughout the process of assimilation with the goal of moving the family toward the earliest possible achievement of self-support. Case managers begin with an assessment of the refugee/refugee family's overall needs and, building on his/her/their competencies, develop a **comprehensive resettlement plan (CRP).**

CRP's include strategies to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency and involve each employable family member, not just the primary wage earner, in employment related services to obtain sufficient earnings for the family's economic independence. Utilization of refugee cash and medical assistance is an option **only** when absolutely necessary, must be integrated into a refugee's CRP, and should always be considered as a temporary form of aid.

## 2. Culturally and Linguistically Compatible

In recent years, newly arriving refugees are coming from a greater diversity of countries. In order to ensure that all refugees are guaranteed access to programs and services regardless of their language or cultural orientation, Virginia's service providers must stay informed about arrival populations and must be responsive to the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of these new arrivals. Service providers must adjust their staffing patterns and delivery of services so that the staff mirrors the make-up of the refugee population served, and so that compatible translation and interpreter services are made available to all newly arriving refugee customers.

Accessibility is more than an ideal; it is mandated by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (CRA). Under the CRA Title VI, persons with limited English are defined as Limited English Persons (LEP's) and guidelines are set forth for the provision of interpretation services to these individuals. **All applicants to this RFA are subject to compliance with CRA, Title VI.**

ONS requires that service providers afford refugee women the same opportunities and access for employment services as refugee men. Additionally, service providers must foster a climate of agency sensitivity to gender issues, such as rape and abuse, as well as dress and cultural practices that may be vastly different from mainstream America. Thus, service providers should make every attempt to hire bilingual/bicultural women to promote adequate access to services by refugee women.

**ONS monitors service providers closely to ensure that the staffing plan truly reflects the gender, ethnicity, and language characteristics of those being served.** ONS also closely monitors program service delivery to ensure that optimal efforts are being made to serve all new arrivals regardless of refugee skill level or characteristics, including gender and ethnicity.

### **3. Focused on Employment with Concurrent ESL/Supportive Services**

Initial resettlement efforts must help refugees understand the American work ethic that achievement of economic self-sufficiency begins with a job as soon as possible after arrival in the U.S. Therefore, employment services begin immediately after a refugee's arrival in the United States, and the first placement into a job should come no later than 90 days after employment services begin. ONS recognizes that a refugee's first job may not in itself provide the funds necessary to enable economic self-support; however, it is an essential first step towards the goal of self-sufficiency. Services shall be developed to address other problems and barriers faced by refugees as they assimilate into communities, in order to improve employability and to assist refugees in securing and retaining a job. English language training must be offered concurrently with employment services and must be offered at times and places which are convenient to working refugees.

### **4. Services Provided Through Coalitions and/or Partnerships**

Refugee resettlement in Virginia is carried out by numerous service providers. Agencies that engage in reception and placement and resettlement activities directly are the backbone of service delivery, but their work by no means occurs in a vacuum. Public entities, especially local departments of social services, local health departments, and public schools, have key roles to play in the resettlement process. Refugee and ethnic organizations, churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and the religious community are also very important. In fact, ONS views refugee resettlement in Virginia as a vast network consisting of any and all organizations and agencies that play a role directly or indirectly in assisting resettlement agencies to attain the goal of durable self-sufficiency and successful assimilation of refugees into Virginia's communities.

ONS recognizes and promotes alignment of the various organizations involved in refugee resettlement into partnerships, coalitions, alliances, associations, and working groups. Linkages among service providers may be formal or informal. They may be broad-based and open-ended, such as consortiums or councils. They may entail coming together for a limited time in order to attain specific short-term goals, such as application for a grant or to address a regional problem or unmet need. Or they may entail more permanent arrangements between or among agencies, such as reciprocal agreements that include memorandums of agreement (MOA's) or memorandums of understanding (MOU's). Inter-agency relationships may also consist of shared staffing, on-going trainings, or sharing of best practices.

Whatever the configuration or format of these cooperative activities, ONS encourages them to the extent that they enhance the provision of cost effective, culturally and linguistically compatible services, and views them as a means to an end, namely, a more coordinated, seamless service delivery system.

### **5. Working to Educate the Community and to Provide Outreach**

Service provider agencies work to involve the wider community in the refugee resettlement process and garner community resources to assist in the successful assimilation of refugees into these communities. In addition to gathering community resources to serve as a network of support for refugees, service provider agencies also serve as educators to the community, providing information on the many contributions refugees make to area communities (i.e. as a tax base and labor force). Communities learn about the special challenges refugees face in adjusting to a new life in America and as witnesses to this resilient spirit and sense of value in human life, communities are reminded

that we live in a country of constitutional freedoms. Through a “give and take” exchange of resources and information, refugees are supported and communities are strengthened.

## **6. Utilizing Volunteers and Mentors**

Volunteers are essential to the successful assimilation of refugees into local communities. Therefore, the Virginia model of resettlement incorporates volunteers early in the resettlement process to serve as mentors, teachers, and role models. There are numerous sources in the community from which to draw volunteers. These include, but are not limited to, churches, schools and universities, businesses and employers, public service workers, and private citizens. Regardless of their origin, agencies should actively encourage volunteers who are bi-cultural and bi-lingual. Although some individuals may spontaneously come forth to volunteer, the role of volunteers is maximized when resettlement organizations and other direct service providers have in place a plan for the use of volunteers, complete with job descriptions.

Volunteers truly add value to the resettlement process in a more effective way when their involvement occurs in a structured manner. The Virginia model for resettlement places emphasis on volunteer programs. The program is carried out by one or more designated staff whose responsibilities are clearly delineated. A good volunteer program starts with a planned approach for recruitment, orientation and training of volunteers. The program includes a plan for management and assignment of volunteers that incorporates monitoring, documentation of activities and hours, and feedback with staff. The program also includes periodic trainings, and should include a plan for recognition. Good management of volunteers results in volunteers who are qualified for their assignment, dedicated to their task, and who work hand-in-glove with professional staff.

Refugee communities also have an important role in the assimilation of newly arriving refugees. Refugee leaders and former refugees can serve as volunteers and mentors, so that they may give back to the community in part some of what they have been given.

## **7. Goal and Outcome Oriented**

The Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program is required to submit to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) an annual goal plan that projects performance outcomes and details continuous improvement of performance six measures, defined in the Government Performance Reporting Act of 1993 (GPRA).

The Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program is required by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to show the efficacy of its model for resettlement on an ongoing basis. At a minimum, program performance is measured through the six designated outcome goals, and ONS is held to the outcomes submitted to that ORR. ONS submits quarterly progress reports to ORR. All service providers that contract with ONS as a result of this RFA are subject and held accountable to following performance measures:

1. Number of refugee job (employment) placements
2. Number of cash assistance terminations due to earnings
3. Number of cash assistance reductions due to earnings
4. Average hourly wage at placement
5. Number of employment retentions after 90 days
6. Number of placements (entered employment) with health benefits